

When should I contact the
University Ombudsman?

- You need an impartial and confidential sounding board.
- You think you may have been treated unfairly.
- You want to report a problem but first you want to get a sense of possible outcomes.
- You want to discuss a University policy or practice that you think is unfair or problematic.
- You are not sure which University policy applies to your situation.
- You need a mediator or a facilitator.
- You are not sure where else to turn for help and need guidance.

Notice: The University Ombudsman is not authorized to accept notice of claims or formal complaints against Norfolk State University.

What we do not do

- Serve as an advocate or representative for any person in any case.
- Offer legal advice.
- Provide psychological counseling.
- Establish, change or waive policies.
- Rule or decide facts in a matter.
- Take formal complaints or notice for Norfolk State University.

Office of the University Ombudsman



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Listen

Respond

Resolve

Giving voice. Empowering people.



University Ombudsman Services

Understanding an Ombudsman Role

A college or university ombudsman is authorized by an institution of higher education to serve as an impartial and confidential resource to assist faculty and staff and all members of the university community, and to listen, offer options, facilitate resolutions, informally investigate or otherwise examine these issues independently and impartially. The Ombudsman provides information related to university policies and procedures and facilitates resolution of concerns through informal channels. The Ombudsman does not replace or participate in any formal grievance or appeal process.



Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics

The Ombudsman practices according to the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics. All staff of the Office are required to adhere to these standards, available at www.ombudsassociation.org. The Ombudsman is a member of the IOA and attends regular trainings and the annual IOA conference. The Ombudsman publicizes the confidential, independent, neutral and informal nature of his/her services and explains these ethical standards to each visitor:

- ⇒ Independence: The Ombudsman is independent in structure, function, and appearance to the highest degree possible within the organization.
- ⇒ Confidentiality: The Ombudsman holds all communications with those seeking assistance in strict confidence, and does not disclose confidential communications unless given permission to do so. The only exception to this privilege of confidentiality is where there appears to be imminent risk of serious harm.
- ⇒ Neutrality and Impartiality: The Ombudsman, as a designated neutral, remains unaligned and impartial. The Ombudsman does not engage in any situation which could create a conflict of interest.
- ⇒ Informality: The Ombudsman, as an informal resource, does not participate in any formal adjudicative or administrative procedure related to concerns brought to his/her attention.

Activities and Functions

- Listens and understands issues while remaining neutral with respect to the facts.
- Assists in reframing issues and developing and helping individuals evaluate options.
- Guides or coaches individuals to deal directly with other parties, including the use of formal resolution resources of the organization.
- Refers individuals to appropriate resolution resources.
- Assists in surfacing issues to formal resolution channels.
- Facilitates informal resolution processes.
- Identifies new issues and opportunities for systemic change for the organization.